Army Suicide Prevention

Suicide Prevention Overview

- Personal Experience
- Myths
- The Problem – Increase in Suicide
- Shoulder to Shoulder Video
- Risk Factors – Review of Training Tip Card
- Balancing Stress of Life
- Symptoms of Risk
- Red Flags
- Vignettes/ACE card
- Stigma
- Key Ideas
- Confidential Resources

Personal Experience

- How many of you have had personal experience with someone who has attempted suicide?
- How many of you have had personal experience with someone who has been successful in suicide?

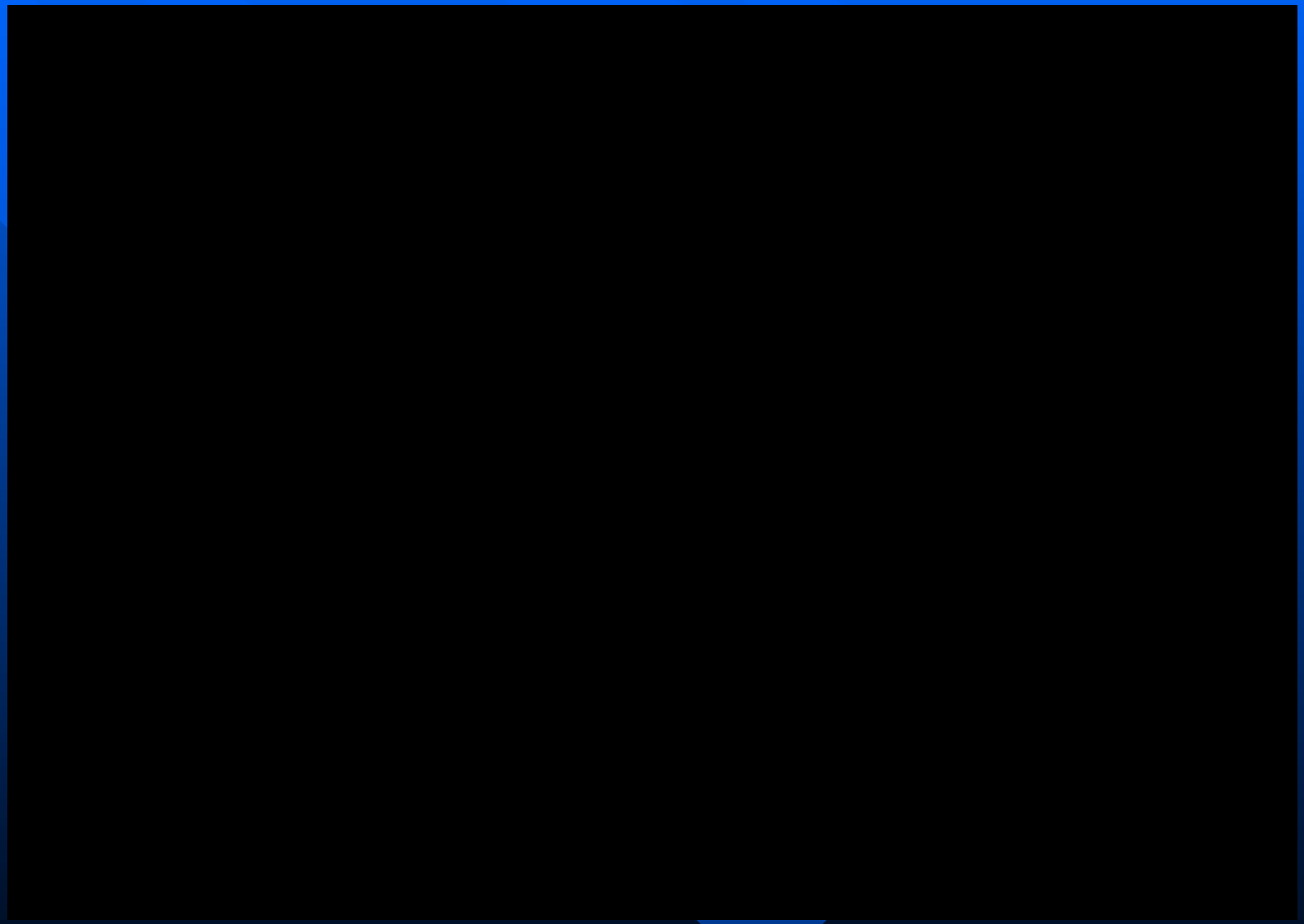
You are welcome to share your story if you like. If, at the end of our time together, you have painful memories that have been stirred, please stay after class. Do not carry them out with you.

Myths

- People who commit suicide are mentally ill
- Good circumstances prevent suicide
- People who talk about suicide won't commit suicide
- People who threaten suicide, cut their wrists, or don't succeed with other attempts are not a risk for
- Talking about suicide will put the idea into another person's head
- People who are deeply depressed don't have the energy to commit suicide
- People often commit suicide without warning

The Problem -Increase in Suicides in the Army

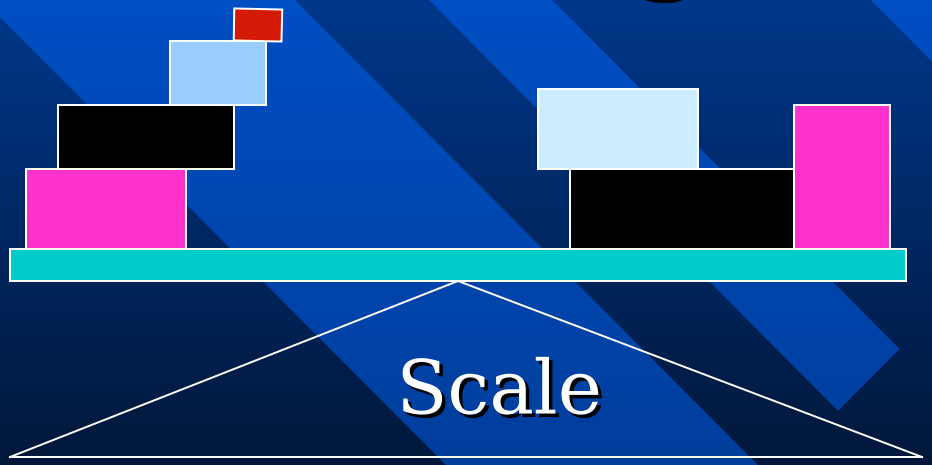
- Recently, the Army has seen an increase in suicides and suicidal behavior over the last few years.
- The loss of any Soldier impacts not only that Soldier's family and friends but hurts unit morale and unit cohesion. The entire Army hurts when a Soldier dies from suicide.
- The key to preventing suicides is for all Soldiers and DAC employees to help each other.



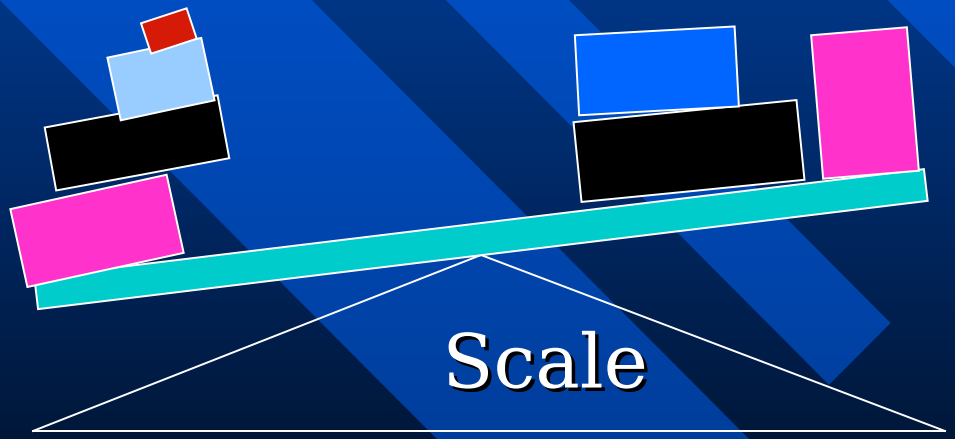
Risk Factors

- Relationship Difficulties
- Legal Problems
- Family Violence
- Poor Job Performance
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse
- Financial Problems
- Inability to Cope
- Disciplinary Actions
- Under Investigation

Balancing the stress of Life is a difficult challenge



It doesn’t take a lot to throw life out of balance



Symptoms of Risk

- Suicide Gestures
- Giving Away Items
- Talking About Suicide
- Talking About Death
- Farewells
- Pessimistic Outlook
- Increased Alcohol Use
- Weeping Easily
- Change in Eating Habits- Weight Loss

Symptoms of Risk Continued

- Drop in Performance
- Loss of Sense of Humor
- Continual Sadness
- Feeling Hopeless/Helpless
- Change in Sleeping Habits
- Increased Irritability
- Social Withdrawal
- Loss of Health
- Chronic Illness/Pain

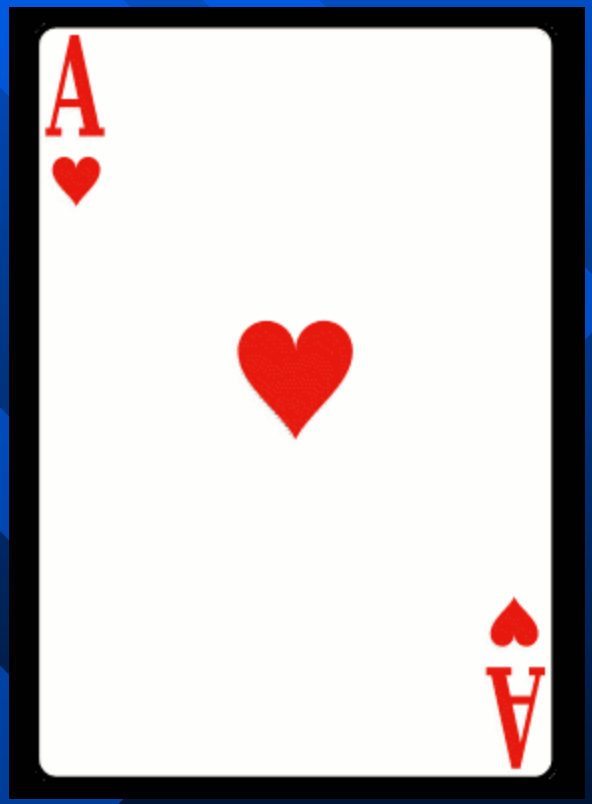
VIGNETTES

Vignette Questions

- What warning signs or symptoms presented in the vignette indicated that the Soldier/employee was experiencing problems?
- What courses of actions could you have taken to help this Soldier/employee?
- What are some barriers, attitudes, and problems that Soldiers /employees might face from leaders/supervisors when asking for help?
- Who could you have referred this Soldier/employee for help?
- What problems do you have as leaders/supervisors in dealing with Soldiers/employees who exhibit behavioral and emotional problems?

INTERVENTION ACE

- Ask your Buddy/Co-worker
  - Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
  - Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking of killing yourself?
- Care for your Buddy/Co-worker
  - Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
  - Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Escort your Buddy/Co-worker
  - Never leave you're the person alone
  - Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, EAP or a primary care provider



Suicide Vignette #1

PVT Smith was a 22 year-old single, black male who was three months into his first deployment. While surfing MySpace.com, he learned that his deployed girlfriend was involved in another relationship. After that, PVT Smith began to abuse alcohol. One evening, PVT Smith refused to go to the gym with his buddies, which was unusual. That night, Private Smith shot himself to death.

Can you list the warning signs?

Suicide Vignette #1 - Response

Given that you know PVT Smith, and are aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response?

1. Wait and see how things go because it's not a good idea to interfere in another Soldier's personal matters. He might get angry.
2. If I knew about his girlfriend problems, I would talk to him to see if he was alright. I would ask him if he felt suicidal. If he said yes, I would escort him to see the commander.
3. Because of his alcohol abuse, I would inform the Platoon SGT that something was troubling PVT Smith i.e., he was

Suicide Vignette #2

SPC Rhodes was a 25 year-old, single white female, 91W, who has deployed three different times: twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. During a current deployment, her TMC experienced a mass casualty in which SPC Rhodes watched several Soldiers from her unit die. She was neither well-liked nor disliked by others. She frequently talked about her boyfriend back home and their plans to marry. About a week before she died, she received a letter from her boyfriend indicating that he wanted to terminate their relationship. SPC Rhodes was discovered in her bunk dead from a drug overdose.

Suicide Vignette #2 - Response

Given that you know SPC Rhodes, and are aware of her distress, which of the following would be the best response?

1. " Dear John or Dear Joan" letters are common during deployments. It is best to wait and see how a Soldier will respond to such a letter. You don't want to ask intrusive questions unnecessarily because the Soldier could get angry.
2. If I had known about her boyfriend problems, I would have asked one of her girlfriends to talk to her. Girls relate better to each other. She would never tell a guy if she was suicidal.
3. Both the mass casualty and the loss of her boyfriend were concerns. I would talk to her to see if she was alright. As her buddy, I would make

Suicide Vignette #3

PFC Morgan was a 19 year-old, single, white male, 11B, who had deployed twice to Iraq with significant combat exposure. PFC Morgan had difficulties learning new Soldiers' skills. Because of his slowness, he was often ridiculed by peers and leadership. Everyone believed that he accepted the treatment as good natured ribbing. Prior to his death, he gave away some personal belongings. About one day before his death, he also told a buddy that he had "had enough". This was interpreted as simple frustration. PFC Morgan was found dead in his car by carbon monoxide poisoning.

Can you list the warning signs?

Suicide Vignette #3 - Response

Given that you know PFC Morgan, and aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response?

1. If I had known he was angry about being "teased", I would talk to him to see if he was alright. I would ask him if he felt suicidal. If he said yes, I would convince him to see a behavioral health provider in the morning. After he made a commitment, I would tell him that I would pick him up the next day.
2. In the Army, people are always joking with each other. That's how we all deal with the stress. If you can't handle the ribbing, you should get out of the Army.

Suicide Vignette #4

Marilyn is a civilian government employee. She is a single mom of two little girls. Last year her husband of 10 years left her for another woman. Marilyn has had a history of depression but seems quite cheerful the last couple of days. She recently increased her life insurance limits and was excited to tell co-workers about how this increase would provide for her girls in the future. This past week she went around to each department saying “goodbye” to her co-workers.

Suicide Vignette #4 - Response

Given that you know Marilyn, what would be the best response?

1. Give her a hug and assume she is saying "goodbye" until tomorrow.
2. Plan to call her supervisor tomorrow to see if Marilyn is leaving the company.
3. Ask Marilyn what she means by "goodbye". Ask Marilyn if she is planning on committing suicide. If Marilyn indicates she is having suicidal thoughts ESCORT Marilyn to the Employee Assistance Program, Emergency Room or other suicide intervention resource.

What coping mechanisms do you find helpful in dealing with your life's stress?

Red Flags…

If someone displays a dramatic behavior or personality change it is vital for supervisors and co-workers to find out what is going on--

Always Ask

"Are you considering suicide?"

If You Suspect The Person Is Suicidal

Save Their '**LIFE**'

- **L**ocate Help: Supervisor, Chapel Staff, Medical Staff, EAP, Friend .
- **I**nform Chain of Command/Supervisor
- **F**ind Someone to Stay with the Person
- **E**xpedite Intervention--

Get Help Immediately

What To Do If You Suspect Trouble

When Not Serving on Duty Status

Save Their '**LIFE**'

- **L**ocate Help: Crisis line, Hospital Emergency Room, Friend, Family, Police, Chaplain, Clergy
- **I**nform Family and Individual's Support Netwo
- **F**ind Someone to Stay with the Person
- **E**xpedite--Get Help Immediately

What To Avoid Doing If You Suspect Trouble: Don't

- Ignore Warning Signs
- Wārn Against Seeking Help
- Assume Minor Troubles are Unimportant
- Give Advice/False Reassurance
- Assume Someone is Immune from Self-harm
- Advise Drug/Alcohol Use
- Challenge the Individual to "Just Do It"

Leaders and Supervisors Can Reduce Stigma by:

- Not discriminating against Soldiers/employees who receive mental health counseling.
- Supporting confidentiality between the Soldier/employee and their behavioral health care provider.
- Reviewing unit policies and procedures that could preclude Soldiers/employees from receiving all necessary and indicated assistance.
- Educating all Soldiers/employees and family members about anxiety, stress, depression, and treatment.

Key Ideas

- People are the Army's greatest asset and we want to preserve their careers by helping them deal with life's stress

- Everyone is encouraged to seek help before letting their feelings get out of control

Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness

- Seeking help doesn't necessarily end one's career—Not seeking help when needed <u>will</u> end a career

Confidential Resources

- The Chaplain can be a tremendous source of help and support by offering confidentiality to you when talking about personal issues.
- The Employee Assistance Program is available to Civilians going through crisis.
- Ft. Detrick resources can be found at

This Concludes the Presentation on Suicide Prevention

Do You Have Any Questions?

Printable Vignette Pages

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Can you list the warning signs?

Given that you know PVT Smith, and are aware of his distress, which of the following would be the best response?

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2. If I knew about his girlfriend problems, I would talk to him to see if he was alright. I would ask him if he felt suicidal. If he said yes, I would escort him to see the commander.
3. Because of his alcohol abuse, I would inform the Platoon SGT that something was troubling PVT Smith i.e., he was drinking too much. I would suggest that the Platoon SGT talk to him.

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different times: twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. During a current deployment,
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Soldiers from her unit die. She was neither well-liked nor disliked by others. She
frequently talked about her boyfriend back home and their plans to marry. About a
week before she died, she received a letter from her boyfriend indicating that he
wanted to terminate their relationship. SPC Rhodes was discovered in her bunk dead
from a drug overdose.

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2. In the Army, people are always joking with each other. That's how we all deal with the stress. If you can't handle the ribbing, you should get out of the Army.
3. When I heard that he had had enough, I would immediately ask him if he was thinking of suicide. If he said yes, I would stay with him, and inform the chain of command. I would never leave him alone until he saw a helping provider.

Suicide Vignette #4

Marilyn is a civilian government employee. She is a single mom of two little girls.
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history of depression but seems quite cheerful the last couple of days. She recently
increased her life insurance limits and was excited to tell co-workers about how this
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Given that you know Marilyn, what would be the best response?

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